

VZCZCXRO3148
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHMD #0383/01 0611122
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021122Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1981
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2495
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0314

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 000383

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA/IPA FOR NICOLE SHAMPAIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KISL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN HOSTS MINISTERIAL WITH ARAB NATIONS

REF: A. MADRID 337

[1](#)B. MADRID 336

[1](#)C. MADRID 340

MADRID 00000383 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA Director General for Middle East Affairs briefed PolCouns February 26 on events surrounding the February 23 Spain-Arab Nations Ministerial in Madrid to inaugurate Spain's newest cultural/international center, "Casa Arabe." Approximately 14 Arab Foreign Ministers attended the conference along with Palestinian envoy Nabil Shaat. The conference issued what Iranzo said was a fairly progressive declaration calling for normalized relations with Israel, though he admitted that this declaration was agreed to only grudgingly by Arab representatives and Spain had pushed it at the urging of Israeli FM Livni. On February 22 and 23, Spanish FM Moratinos held bilateral meetings with Shaat and several Arab Foreign Ministers to discuss the prospects of the Mecca unity government and the situation in Iraq. At the Syria bilat Iranzo said that Syrian Foreign Minister Mu'allim told Moratinos that Syria is interested in playing a positive role in Iraq and had played an instrumental role in engineering the Mecca unity government agreement. During the meeting with Iranzo, Polcouns also raised Western Sahara and US-Spain efforts to develop closer coordination on Africa issues. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Iranzo said that the Casa Arabe inauguration offered the opportunity for the first Spain-hosted Arab summit, and attendees included FM's from Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and U.A.E., as well as Nabil Shaat from Palestinian Government and a sub-minister from Egypt. Discussion during the summit focused on the Mecca agreement and the group issued a declaration that among other issues called for normalization of relations with Israel, a multilateral international conference, renewed negotiations between Syria and Lebanon, and a swift resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Iranzo said Spain's efforts during the Casa Arabe inauguration were not meant to serve as the beginning of a process or to substitute for bilateral negotiations; the Casa Arabe opening merely offered a venue on the side for reasoned discussion and to promote further movement. Iranzo said that his government had argued that Arabs should support the trilateral process and Quartet, because looking on the political horizon, the natural adversary and rival for both Israel and Arabs is Iran.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Iranzo, the Arab participants noted

their disappointed in lack of movement by Israel, laying the current impasse on Israel after the Mecca agreement. He described particular concern among the Arabs that the Israeli government is currently too weak to serve as an effective interlocutor that could reach agreement. Iranzo pointed with pride to the line in the declaration in which the Arabs present called for normalization of relations with Israel. He said that during her recent visit to Madrid Israeli FM Livni insisted to the Spanish that they should urge the Arabs to publicly accept the need for normalization of Arab relations with Israel. Iranzo said that Spain therefore pushed hard for the line in the text on normalization and that it was accepted only reluctantly by Arab participants. Nonetheless, Iranzo told PolCouns that "Arab nations will be Israel's best and most important friends once a peace is achieved."

¶4. (C) On the margins of the inaugural events, Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos also held a series of bilats with visiting Foreign Ministers and representatives, including those from Yemen, Syria (ref A), Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and U.A.E. as well as Nabith Shaat.

¶5. (C) The Shaat bilat focused on the Mecca agreement, remaining difficulties for establishing a unity government, and the Jerusalem meeting between Secretary Rice, Israeli PM Olmert, and Abu Mazen. Iranzo said that Hamas had ceded more than Fatah in the Mecca agreement and that it offered a way forward that should be built upon. Iranzo said that Shaat and others expressed concern about the weakness of the Olmert government as a credible interlocutor for the negotiations. Iranzo said that for the Palestinians, movement and access are more important than international aid. Shaat noted that "We know how to make money, but we can't move around to conduct business."

¶6. (C) Moratinos found Syrian FM Mu'Allam "serious" and indeed "loquacious" during their discussions, which centered

MADRID 00000383 002.2 OF 003

on the Mecca agreement and Iraq. Iranzo said Moratinos thanked Syria for its role in brokering the Mecca agreement; Iranzo insisted that Syria is playing a big role in restraining Fatah and Hamas. Moratinos reiterated the need to settle the unity government question, free the Israeli hostages, recognize Israel and meet Quartet conditions. Iranzo said that Mu'allam told Moratinos that Syria is ready to continue pressure in the Palestinian territories to achieve stability there. Mu'allim also discussed Iraq and Syrian relations with Talabani. Mu'allam told Moratinos that Syria is interested in addressing refugee issues and he asserted that Syria is trying to play a positive role in Iraq stabilization. Mu'allam noted to Moratinos that the Sunnis have their own wealth and unexploited hydrocarbons within their sphere of influence. The Syrian also expressed concern over whether Kirkuk would be under Kurdish control or would have some sort of special status. Syria also favors reintegration of Baathists into Iraqi institutions. Iranzo said Moratinos urged Syria to fulfill the requirements of the international community in Lebanon; Iranzo also noted that the Saudis now are energized to work on Lebanon negotiations.

¶7. (C) Iranzo characterized Moratinos' meeting with Iraqi FM Zebari as a useful discussion. Moratinos emphasized Spain's recognition of legitimacy of the Iraqi government, and the two Ministers discussed how best for Spain to fulfill the remainder of its 2003 Madrid Iraq Donor's Conference financial pledge. Zebari invited Moratinos to return the visit to Baghdad, and Moratinos agreed in principal. Iranzo said Zebari "sometimes talks as a Kurd and sometimes as an Iraqi." When asked about whether the Iraqis had commented on their relations with Iran, Iranzo said Zebari did not dispute that Maliki clearly has relations with Tehran but signaled that he personally does not. Moratinos said Iraq needed to continue working on reconciliation and that the internal

political scene needed "active policy and political management" which is not the responsibility of the coalition.

The Iraqi FM also expressed appreciation for Spain's contribution of \$22 million for the Basrah Children's hospital project.

//AFRICA//

18. (C) PolCouns took the opportunity to relay to Iranzo the USG's interest in finding cooperative efforts with Spain in Africa, and noted the U.S. military's plans to create a new Africa Command as part of broader U.S. efforts to stem terrorism and other destabilizing trends in the region in a more strategic approach. We also briefed Iranzo on Embassy Madrid Pol and Econ officers' recent meeting with Carmen Diaz, the sub-director general for Africa in Spain's AID-equivalent to discuss the GOS's longer term development assistance efforts there (ref B also details differences in the GOS's broader "Plan Africa" and on-going development projects).

19. (C) Iranzo said that Spain also remained committed to explore avenues for cooperation, underscored that Spain's interest is great due to immigration, compared to U.S. more altruistic or strategic interests. He said Spain's focus, in addition to North Africa, remained on West Africa, the source of much of the illegal immigration now coming to Spain via the Canaries. He noted that Spain and the U.S. share interests in managing extremism in the Sahel and that Spain's new Embassies in Niamey and Bamako reflect those concerns. After traveling to Africa numerous times last year, Moratinos is also contemplating visits to Kenya, Ethiopia, and Congo; Deputy FM Leon and Spanish AID (AECI) chief Leirje Pajin just visited Darfur, Khartoum and Addis Abbaba. Iranzo also identified Senegal as another particular concern for Spain's efforts to manage the immigration flow.

110. (C) Moratinos remains interested in a visit by AF A/S Frazer in conjunction with the inauguration of Spain's "Casa Africa" in the Canary Islands, but Iranzo said that the opening had been delayed due to construction delays and the schedule of the Royal Family. Iranzo expressed appreciation for continued Embassy and Department outreach on Africa issues, including during the visit of MFA Deputy Director General for Africa Antonio Sanchez-Benedito to Washington for consultations with the AF bureau.

WESTERN SAHARA/Morocco Plan

111. (C) Spain very much appreciates the Embassy's and NEA DAS Gordon Gray's efforts to keep Madrid informed of ongoing events. Iranzo noted in particular briefings on U/S Burns'

MADRID 00000383 003.2 OF 003

meeting with the Moroccan delegation on the autonomy plan and referred to the GOS meetings with the same delegation February 8 (ref C). He said that the Spain-Morocco summit week of March 5 followed by King Juan Carlos' visit to Algeria March 13-15 would provide opportunities for the GOS to support the process. The GOS will further emphasize to Morocco the need to consult Algeria and the Polisario and produce a written plan. Iranzo expressed cautious enthusiasm about the Moroccan efforts as a possible basis for a further dialogue and progress. He insisted that the next MINURSO mandate renewal in the UNSC should not be a technical renewal like the last time, saying that now is the moment to lay down a directive for dialogue -- though without too many conditions so as to make it achievable. Spain will then be in a position to actively lobby both sides.

Visit Embassy Madrid's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/madrid/>

AGUIRRE